

Quantified self through the lens of design

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PRACTICE- BASED RESEARCH**

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PHDBYDESIGN



FOREWORD

PhD by Design events enable early-career design researchers to explore multiple aspects of practice-based knowledge production. Our main purpose is to create a supportive and engaged environment where researchers share and work through experiences, dilemmas and doubts.

In different institutional settings, the PhD by Design team has been experimenting and testing inventive formats for bringing researchers together to explore emergent topics - such as messiness, dissemination, difference, and future of practice-based research. We are committed to building a diverse community of practice-based design researchers by forming new ramifications and collaborations for each conference and event.

This year, we are thrilled to collaborate with six doctoral students –Amro Yaghi, Aya Musmar, Cagri Sanliturk, Eleni Pashia, John Jeong and Maha Al-Ugaily – from the Sheffield School of Architecture, who through their engagement and energy transformed the conference experience and actively contributed to the PhD by Design platform.

Looking forward to see where this collaborative venture will take us next.

Bianca Elzenbaumer (*Leeds College of Art*),
Alison Thomson and Maria Portugal
(*Goldsmiths, University of London*)

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REFLECTION

PhD by design conference aims at creating a multidisciplinary platform where students debate “design” and “research” as combined terms, using each of the terms to explore and reflect upon the other alternatively.

Having this year’s PhD By Design conference hosted at University of Sheffield School of Architecture, our theme has been inspired by our school longstanding commitment to the political disposition of the self in research. This year’s theme aims at articulating the “idea of the self in practice-led research”. Subjectivity is how our platform in Sheffield brings the two terms into discussion. We aspire to break the conceived notion of design to redefine it as the process of struggles with the self: confession, realization, disguise and evolution. We invite our participants to confess their positioning, transformation, ambiguity of ‘the self’.

To confess this position, we bring the question of who ‘I’ am to be evoked in research, to be brought into focus, exposed and examined, critiqued and debated. We seek to engage with narratives of ‘self’; how the notion of the researcher self has been assumed and embodied and what it is yet to become in research. Our themes will mainly address our “Becoming”. Becoming a researcher, a machine, a model, a woman, a self... through design.

PhD by Design Sheffield Team

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Quantified self through the lens of design

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ABSTRACT

We're surrounded by objects that constantly keep track of our movements, but it's growing, by individuals, the voluntary interest to keep track own data, thanks to new technologies that allow the design of devices, technologically advanced, invisible and accessible also from an economic point of view.

What initially was just a practice followed by a few enthusiasts, now it's capturing the interest of anyone who wants to monitor aspects of life over which then reflect, thereby enlarging the interest also in fields that go beyond fitness, including healthcare and mobility. If, in fact, many self-trackers simply collect information about themselves as a souvenir or for the sake of it, others pursue more specific goals, recording detailed data and trying to have a more holistic and systemic view of their habits.

Data visualization is the way in which all the data collected are made available to the user. It can be a powerful tool for allowing users to identify patterns, comparisons and relations; a medium with a wide range of expressive potential and with the goal to transform data into information and information into insight.

To do so it becomes important the analysis of data and their context, properly related to each other and with other datasets to identify distributions, sizes and correlations, sorted and aggregated according to criteria to the research.

In this context emerge the expertise of the data designer, a competence that has not only the graphic skills, but someone who is able to understand data collected in order to transform data into knowledge.

The objective of my research is to design a tool in order to find more simple and clear way to show data, helping in the identification of correlations between state and activities carried out, enabling new practices of sustainability and bring the individual from being a producer of passive data to an active informed and conscious subject.

Because of the nature of the research, a strong interdisciplinarity is required: the PhD program is carried out in collaboration with TIM Research Lab.

BIO

Barbara Stabellini is an ecodesigner interested in the field of data visualization, interaction and innovation design, with a particular attention of the sustainability point of view. She earned the Master of Science in Ecodesign in 2014 and now she is a PhD Candidate at Polytechnic of Turin (Management, Production and Design) with a TIM Research scholarship. She is co-founder of the Innovation Design Lab with other colleagues.

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data designer



